

April 1, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Philip Brisk, Chair 
BCOE Executive Committee

RE: Proposal for a Dean's final Merit Delegation at UCR

Dear Jason,

The BCOE Executive Committee reviewed the Administration's request for the use of "Professor of Practice in (e.g., Public Policy, Education, Engineering)" as a working title for "Adjunct Professor." The Committee failed to understand the rationale for the request, and is generally concerned that creating this new title may increase confusion about the various job titles that include the word "Professor" outside of ladder-rank faculty.

First and foremost, it is unclear what problem this request aims to solve, or what benefits to Colleges and or Campus would be accrued from the proposed alteration of terminology. For example, are adjuncts presently complaining? Is there a recruitment or a retention problem somewhere? While such problems are worth solving (presuming that they exist), the Committee is concerned that this particular request could create more confusion than anything.

The Committee found it challenging to evaluate the merits of the request without a clear definition of the Professor of the Practice terminology. For individuals, are there benefits to transitioning from a position as Adjunct Professor to Professor of Practice? Are there implications for job security, financial remuneration, etc.? Beyond formal definitions, ongoing perceptions of the term Professor of Practice vis-a-vis Adjunct Professor is unclear: What do students think when they see the title? What do advisory boards think? What do alumni think? What do potential donors think? Etc.

The Committee was also confused as to the specifics of the request: is the proposal to eliminate the Adjunct Professor title or to create a similar Professor of Practice title that exists side-by-side? The Committee's understanding is that an Adjunct Professor contributes more than teaching: an Adjunct Professor may have some involvement with research, including collaboration with faculty, serving on M.S. or Ph.D. Thesis Committees, etc.; in other words, and Adjunct Professor is legitimately engaged with a Department or College but without full-time employment. In contrast, the description of the Professor of Practice title seems to be primarily teaching-related.

Just to illustrate further confusion, there is also the title Research Professor. Under current rules and regulations, a Research Professor can apply for grants and can hire students, but cannot serve on an M.S. or Ph.D. thesis Committee unless they are given a teaching title; BCOE makes them Adjunct Professors so that they can do this as a bureaucratic workaround. The implications for Research Professors with respect to the request are once again unclear.